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competent than an ever-changing jury, they are the better qualified to judge of facts, since cases involving the same or similar questions will occur time and again, giving them knowledge by experience.

By this plan you no longer place a premium on ignorance, and you secure what is the prime object of every suit, allowing every one to assert his rights speedily, with the least expense and the highest degree of certainty.

CHARLES A. THATCHER.

A TERRIBLE POSSIBILITY.

"Now a bubble burst, and now a world."

OID says that while Jupiter made the body of the brute to extend horizontally, its face looking upon the ground, he made man to stand erect, his gaze fixed upon the stars. This may have been the original intention, but if we may trust that most faithful of all mirrors, the daily press, the gaze of the average modern man would be better accommodated by the horizontal than by the erect position of the body. The gems which stud the heavens may be brighter and more numerous than those which lie buried in the ground, but they are not so available as collateral.

Now and then, however, the heavenly bodies assume a negative value which commands the attention of other men than astronomers. Some far-off star explodes, involving its retinue of planets in stupendous ruin. Why may not a similar fate befall our own star, the sun? Then what would become of us and our collateral? The possibility of such a catastrophe invests the sun with a sudden dignity and importance, which the beneficent glory, the unmenacing splendor, of ages could not give him. The common eye is momentarily lifted from the ground; even the daily newspaper honors the grand old luminary with a column or two. This is most apt to follow upon an especially active period of spots, with the consequent meteorological disturbances, like that which has recently occurred.

Science has delivered us from the terrors which afflicted the childhood of our race. Comets, those hobgoblins of the skies, and eclipses, those frightful feints of the angry gods, no longer blanch the faces of men. But for every imaginary terror she has banished, science has revealed a real danger. Microbes and bacteria replace the malevolent sprites of the water and the air; and in the spectacle of the actual conflagration of systems, men have forgotten their childish fear of comets and eclipses. The ghosts of the night have gone, but the sword, bullet, and torch, so to speak, of the day have come.

As we have asked, why may not our sun explode, or burst forth suddenly into such overwhelming intensity of radiation that the earth and all her sister-planets shall be shrivelled like insects in a glowing furnace? It would be an insignificant casualty in the universe, the extinguishment of but a single spark in the all-pervading fire.

Change is the law of all physical being. Nothing is immortal but the ultimate atom. The sun and its planets had a beginning: they must have an end. When will that end come? Not for many æons yet, we hope. But though we all hope to die at a good old age, some of us must die to-morrow. If to-night the astronomer descries some remote system "into ruin hurled," to-morrow night may see our own sharing the same fate.

This is possible, but not probable. Though death is the destiny of all, monads, men, and worlds alike, as a rule it does not come without ample

warning. In the vast majority of cases it is preceded by unmistakable symptoms. So far has spectroscopic science advanced that it is able to classify stars very much as medical science classifies men, into the "healthy," the "doubtful," and the "dangerous." Our sun, we are rejoiced to learn, is rated among the "healthy." Its eleven-year periods of spots are not the morbid intermittence of fever, but the natural pulsations of its great, glowing heart.

Even if its intensity of radiation should rise far above the usual maximum, it would not necessarily be destructive of planetary life. Tyndall has shown by a series of more than a thousand experiments that an extremely slight change in the constitution of the atmosphere would make a very great difference in its heat-absorbing and heat-transmitting power. A little increase in the average amount of watery vapor held in suspension, for instance, would change a tropical to a temperate climate. In its oceans, therefore, the earth has a shield against the fiery darts of her great lord and master. If they should grow too fierce, like a woman she would quench them with *salt water*.

We may therefore contemplate the dangers to which the solar system is exposed with the same calm unconcern with which the man in robust health contemplates his own possible untimely demise.

E. P. JACKSON.

"GREATER NEW YORK."

THE question of creating a huge American city with the island of Manhattan as its centre, which was under consideration at the recent session of the New York Legislature, is one of more than local importance. Indeed, it is no exaggeration to say that it is a question of national interest.

If the plan agreed upon by the commission appointed in 1890 to consider the subject should be adopted and carried into effect, "Greater New York"—as the projected city is sometimes rather magniloquently called—would surpass Paris in point of population, and would rank second only to London among the great cities of the world. It is indisputable that there would be something agreeable to American pride in an achievement with such a result.

But there is another consideration of no small moment in the minds of not a few persons. It is evident, taking into consideration the rapid growth of Chicago as shown by the last census, that it will not be many years before that marvellous metropolis of the West comes into close competition with New York on the score of numbers. When that time is at hand, it is confidently expected that a wonderful impulse in the direction of consolidation will make itself felt, and that New York and all its environs will make haste, by the process of wholesale annexation, to ward off the threatened calamity of the removal of the country's most populous city from the Atlantic seaboard to the prairies of the West.

The bill prepared and reported by the commission already mentioned was passed by only one branch of the Legislature of the present year; but the commission still remains in existence, and will doubtless prepare another measure for presentation to the next Legislature. The matter is now fairly before the public,—though profound interest in it seems to be confined to a small group of persons,—and the agitation is likely to be kept up until something like an authoritative decision of the question is arrived at. The pass-